

NIE 30-59 ADVCON
25 August 1959

NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE ESTIMATE

MAIN CURRENTS IN THE ARAB WORLD

NOTE: This is an advance copy of the conclusions of this estimate as approved by the United States Intelligence Board. The complete text will be circulated within five days of this issuance.



- Fundamental political and social factors
 - Main domestic political patterns
 - Roles of Iraq and the UAR
 - The Soviet and Western positions

Central Intelligence Agency

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Submitted by the

DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

The following intelligence organizations participated in the preparation of this estimate: The Central Intelligence Agency and the intelligence organizations of the Departments of State, the Army, the Navy, the Air Force, and The Joint Staff.

Concurred in by the

UNITED STATES INTELLIGENCE BOARD

on 25 August 1959. Concurring were The Director of Intelligence and Research, Department of State; the Assistant Chief of Staff for Intelligence, Department of the Army; the Director of Naval Intelligence; the Assistant Chief of Staff, Intelligence, USAF; the Director for Intelligence, The Joint Staff; the Assistant to the Secretary of Defense, Special Operations; and the Director of the National Security Agency. The Atomic Energy Commission Representative to the USIB and the Assistant Director, Federal Bureau of Investigation, abstained, the subject being outside of their jurisdiction.

C E N T R A L I N T E L L I G E N C E A G E N C Y

25 August 1959

SUBJECT: NIE 30-59: MAIN CURRENTS IN THE ARAB WORLD

THE PROBLEM

To assess the principal forces at work in the Arab World and their implications for future developments in the area.*

CONCLUSIONS

1. For some time, Arab affairs have been dominated by a struggle between defenders of the status quo and advocates of change. This struggle has been complicated by the Iraqi revolution of 1958. The new Iraqi Government has permitted Arab Communists to gain important influence. Its left-wing elements have shown a tendency to take a more radical approach toward social change than has the UAR leadership. The use of

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This estimate is designed to place in perspective the main currents at work in the Arab World in order to lay a foundation for future estimates. It is not aimed at providing specific predictions on the whole range of questions in the area. Particular emphasis has been given to the UAR and Iraq, although we have not excluded consideration of other states.

SECRET

popular pressures by both the regime and its opponents have given the Iraqi population a sense of political participation which may be difficult to control. Iraq thus may come to offer a more radical challenge to traditional Arab institutions than the UAR. Nasser, once considered the most radical advocate of social change, now appears a moderate reformer in comparison to certain elements in Iraq. (Paras. 8, 11, 22-23, 25)

2. The contest for power in Iraq continues, and the character of the regime which will ultimately emerge is still uncertain. As long as this situation obtains, Nasser will almost certainly persist in his efforts to counter the Communist threat from Iraq, and will seek a limited rapprochement with the US. Other states of the area will attempt to cope with the Iraqi Communist threat without augmenting Nasser's influence in the process. (Paras. 28, 30)

3. A Communist takeover in Iraq would present serious dangers for the UAR and for other states of the area. Yet it would draw the battle lines more sharply between Arab nationalism and Soviet aspirations, and would probably tend to drive other Arab governments closer together. On the other hand, a non-Communist Iraq would demonstrate to the Arab World that there was an alternative to Nasser's leadership. In any case, Cairo-Baghdad rivalry is almost certain to continue in one form or another. (Paras. 28-29, 31)

SECRET

4. The Soviets face a major problem in determining whether or not to move for the establishment of a Communist regime in Iraq. Under present circumstances, the Soviets probably prefer that the Iraqi Communists acquire the substance of power through some form of popular front, thus reducing the risks of foreign intervention and of offending Nasser and the nationalists in the area. If in time, however, they came to believe that the Iraqi Communists could take over and retain power, they would be likely to support them in doing so, particularly if the situation in Iran seemed to be developing in a manner favorable to Soviet interests. (Paras. 40-46)

5. Nasser's future in the Arab World will largely depend on the success of the UAR, which in turn is likely to depend on developments in Syria. Nasser's long run chances of establishing the UAR as a firm and enduring unitary state appear no better than even, though we do not anticipate a complete breakup. A clear loss of control in Syria would shake Nasser's claims to Arab leadership, but it would probably not prove fatal to his position in Egypt. (Paras. 34-41)

6. At least in the short run, the outlook for Western influence in the Arab World has improved, largely because of the reactions of Nasser and other Arab leaders to the Communist threat. The longer-term outlook remains highly uncertain. Israel will continue to be a formidable obstacle to real amity

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between the West and the Arabs. The Soviets have established a position of influence in the area that is not likely to disappear. Arab nationalists, whether radical or reformist, will continue to pursue their aims of eliminating special Western positions in the area and regimes identified with the West. While a Communist takeover in Iraq would increase the threat to other Arab states, it would at the same time afford the West opportunities for a substantial increase of influence elsewhere in the area. (Paras. 47-54)

7. In spite of many areas of friction between the West and the Arab states, we believe that basic Western interests in the Middle East -- access to oil and the maintenance of reasonably stable non-Communist governments -- are not incompatible with those of the Arab states themselves. (Paras. 52-54)

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